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Program Aid Number 1288

Emergency Conservation Program

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High winds blow away rich topsoil, causing serious erosion problems.

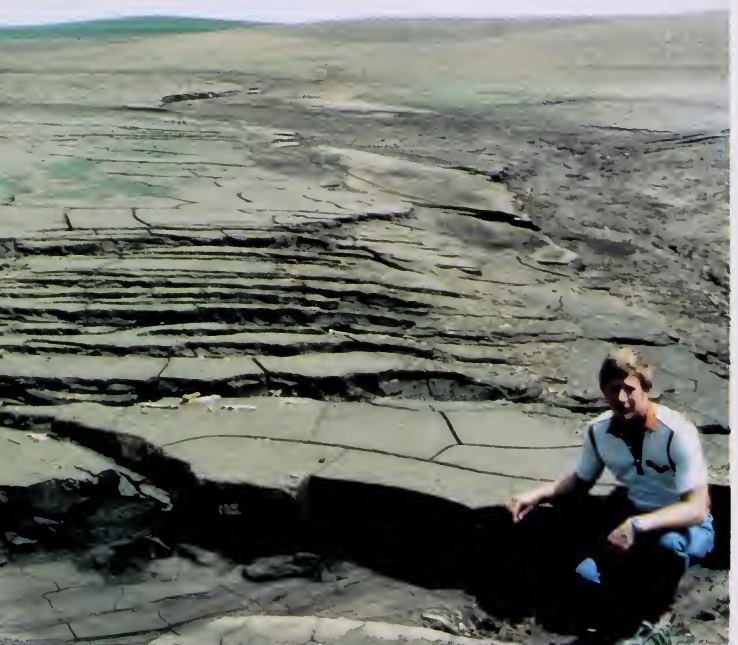
Floodwaters wash out crops and greatly reduce the productive agricultural land needed to grow them.

Searing drought results in acute shortages of critically needed water for livestock and for irrigation systems that are normally used to service orchards and vineyards.

These and other natural disasters leave in their wake fields strewn with debris and severely damaged or demolished conservation structures required to protect soil and water resources. Farmland is ruined, and the means of production are seriously impaired.

The farmer or rancher is left with a crippled operation and confronted with massive repair costs because of conditions over which no individual has any control.

When a devastating natural disaster strikes, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) shares with farmers and ranchers the costs of restoring the land to predisaster conditions, through the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). USDA's Soil Conservation Service provides technical assistance.



Benefits

The benefits of ECP extend beyond the farm and ranch to the local community and to the marketplace nationwide. A productive agriculture, dependent on good farmland properly cared for, is essential to the well-being of all our people. ECP helps assure that America's agricultural production will continue to provide the Nation with ample food and natural fibers; it supports a prosperous rural economy and contributes to the dollar's value in foreign markets.

New Problems

ECP assistance is available only to help solve new conservation problems caused by a natural disaster – problems that impair or endanger the land, that materially affect the productive capacity of crop acreage, that represent unusual damage which – except for wind erosion – is not likely to recur frequently in the same area, and that are so costly to repair that Federal assistance is needed to return the land to productive agricultural use. Conservation problems existing prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.

Local Decisions

In keeping with local administration of ASCS programs, county and State farmer committees determine whether a disaster is of such magnitude that emergency measures are required. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation county committee determines eligibility for ECP assistance on an individual basis, and, in consultation with the State ASC committee, implements the ECP for farms and ranches affected by windstorms, floods, and other natural disasters, except drought. When severe drought conditions exist, the ASCS Deputy Administrator for State and County Operations decides whether ECP assistance is justified.

Approved Practices

Emergency practices approved to rehabilitate farmland damaged by a natural disaster may include:

- Removing from farmlands and field roadways debris that could significantly interfere with normal farming operations.
- Grading, shaping, and filling gullies; releveling irrigated farmland; incorporating sand or silt deposits into the soil; and reestablishing permanent plant cover on areas subject to critical wind or water erosion.
- Restoring or replacing seriously damaged permanent fences, dams, ponds, sod waterways, drainage and irrigation systems, terraces, wells, pipelines, and other facilities.
- Installing pipelines, tanks and troughs; building or deepening wells; and developing springs or seeps for livestock water.
- Special plowing to rough up the land's surface for wind erosion control.

Other emergency conservation measures identified and recommended by the county committee may also be authorized under ECP.

Farmers and ranchers may enter into pooling agreements to solve mutual conservation problems.

For additional information on ECP, contact your county ASCS office.

Participation in ASCS programs is open to all eligible applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or disability.

December 1980

Slightly Revised June 1990